

[22 February, 2001] **RAJYA SABHA**

principle about the possibility of a Counter Trade Arrangement which would enable Iraq to effect import of certain food items (especially wheat) against export of crude oil and oil products.

Hindi Salahakar Samiti in Ministry of External Affairs

166. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) when was the Hindi Salahakar Samiti reconstituted in the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) the number of sittings of the Samiti held during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the efforts made to conduct meetings regularly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) The process of re-constitution of the Hindi Salahakar Samiti of the Ministry of External Affairs is in the final stages. As soon as this is constituted, efforts would be made to hold its meetings regularly.

Improvement in Indo-U.S. relations

167. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any step has been taken by the Government to improve Indo-U.S. relations after the new President took the oath of office in that country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the strategies proposed to be adopted to improve and expand bilateral relations with the United States of America?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government has maintained regular interaction with members of the Bush Administration, both during the U.S.